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ABSTRACT

A survey of twelve public libraries was conducted to determine the effects of the Teletype Writer Exchange (TWX) on library service in the State of Indiana. The centers seem to try very hard to provide excellent service for their satellites, and the satellites overwhelmingly support the centers. The TWX System is not being overtaxed consistently by any of the satellites visited. The centers reported that several of their satellites do not use the system very often while others make moderate but steady demands. Each center and satellite did its best to verify all necessary information for each request. All of the non-member libraries visited reported that they searched their own collection first before requesting materials either by TWX or Interlibrary Loan (ILL) procedures. Record keeping concerning request success and failure rates varies from library to library regardless of whether they belong to the TWX Network or not. Seventeen recommendations which will assist in improving the TWX service are made. (Author/NH)

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February 1, 1972

A PILOT SURVEY OF THE INDIANA LIBRARY NETWORK SYSTEM,

By

Don L. Tolliver

A survey of twelve public libraries was conducted to determine the effects of the Teletype Writer Exchange (TWX) on library service in the State of Indiana. The libraries visited serve diverse clientele under widely varying conditions. All of the libraries visited were quite cooperative and all did their best to provide information during the interview sessions. Many went out of their way to provide additional information about their library and to report their general reactions to the TWX Network System.

The centers seem to try very hard to provide excellent service for their satellites, and the satellites overwhelmingly support the centers. The satellites visited reported that they have few if any difficulties obtaining service from the center in their region. The TWX System is not being overtaxed consistently by any of the satellites visited. The centers reported that several of their satellites do not use the system very often while others make moderate but steady demands.

Each of the centers reported that they have had small communication problems with some of their satellites. The satellite may call in with a long list of requests which can be quite tiring just to write down; and if the material is of a technical nature, it is often difficult to communicate the required terminology to the personnel in the centers by telephone. A few of the satellites

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may call in several times per day while other satellites request popular materials which are in heavy demand by the patrons of the center. The last situation is not considered to be quite "cricket." One particular center feels that each satellite should have an established time to call in and that the calls should be business like, to the point, and follow a standardized procedure. Thus, the most "taxing" problem for the personnel involved may be the occasional misunderstanding or personality clash.

The discussion of verification indicated that each center and satellite did its best to verify all necessary information for each request. From their reports, it would seem that the State Library would have to do little if any verification of requests that come from centers via TWX.

All of the non-member libraries and satellites visited reported that they searched their own collection first before requesting materials either by TWX or Interlibrary Loan (ILL) procedures. The centers, except for South Bend Public, followed the same procedure. The South Bend personnel stated that they never served their satellites from their own collection, thus, of course, there was no reason for them to search their own collection except for their own patron needs.

Record keeping concerning request success and failure rates definitely varies from library to library regardless of whether they belong to the TWX Network or not. Non-members Swayzee and Roann keep no ILL records while non-members Culver and Orleans do. Concerning record keeping in the centers, Kokomo has a complete file of its satellites' requests and hits while New Albany keeps no records and continues to interfile their TWX checkouts with routine checkouts from their own collection. Lake County currently keeps a record of their TWX requests for one year while LaPorte keeps a total record of their TWX requests.

Even with the differences in record keeping methods, there is no indication that libraries continue to request materials which they have not received from previous requests. South Bend reports that some of their satellites request and receive the same title several times a year, however, LaPorte does not contribute to this situation. If LaPorte has received three requests from their patrons for a specific book, then a copy is ordered for their library. Some libraries contact the State Library for items like current titles even though they know they will not get the material. They feel the request must be sent just to please their patrons.

About two-thirds of the libraries felt that they could predict the likelihood of obtaining materials for any given request but then only in very general terms. For example, they would make statements like: we receive seven out of ten requests, or the older materials seem to be easier to obtain. The other one-third stated that they had no way of predicting their request success either by TWX or standard ILL procedures.

About 65-70 percent of the libraries reported that they could not invision any trends which would help determine those requests that typically seem to go unfilled. Other libraries reported general trends such as, "We get better response for non-fiction materials than for new titles and titles on sex which typically seem to go unfilled." Further, none of the library staff members interviewed could detect readily any correlations between the type of patron and the degree their requests went unfilled.

Most librarians were very happy with the State Library and the TWX services they provided. Generally, they were happy with the TWX arrangement, although there was some concern for the overall speed of the TWX System, especially, as

to how confirmations and the materials could arrive at their destination sooner. Some librarians felt that the "hitting" average was much too low, and they hoped that the State Library would either try more than three libraries or allow the centers to contact other non-contacted libraries for the needed materials. One librarian felt that the State of Indiana could support the TWX service if satellites were assessed a fee for the requests they submit. There was concern expressed for the major differences in levels of training and general knowledge and understanding among the personnel who operate the TWX terminals within the centers. This misunderstanding appears to be most serious with, and relates more frequently to, network policy rather than to equipment operation. The satellite personnel, particularly, are unfamiliar with the guidelines.

Other librarians asked for money to support clerical time and additional telephone lines within their center. Concern was evident at one center of the verification methods employed by satellites, and they also expressed the need for uniform request procedures, staggered times for requesting by phone, and the need to follow TWX rules. Another center felt that there should be a time limit on requests so that after a certain date unfilled requests automatically would be dropped. They also were in favor of establishing a standardized date due procedure for all TWX loans.

In terms of hardware, one center often seems to experience inaccuracy in the conveyance of information their satellites submit by telephone. Other satellites and centers report that busy telephone lines occasionally interfer with the efficiency of their TWX operation. In terms of the TWX machines, all of the centers reported that they often experienced long waiting periods before their machine could get "on-line." They also reported an occasional garbled message or a jammed machine perhaps due to inexperienced personnel.

Most of the libraries report little or no consistent delays in getting materials via the TWX System. All those who use the TWX System agreed that it was faster than the standard ILL procedure. Again, concern was expressed about the poor "hit rate," and one library reported that 43 percent of their requests went unfilled. The only serious delays reported were for requests sent out-of-state and for materials currently in circulation. Libraries often reported a waiting period of as long as two months for materials in circulation even through most libraries automatically reserved the materials for them when they received their TWX request.

Many staff members do not understand why they should be required to turn in statistics. The complain that is very time consuming. Some have suggested compiling the statistics on a bimonthly basis rather than monthly. The statistical format is difficult to interpret for most people involved. They misinterpret the meaning of some of the questions and often provide different kinds of data for the same query, i.e., the word "title" means different things to different librarians.

When the issue of publicity was discussed, two of the libraries--one a center and the other its satellite--reported that the publicity has been just average. At the same time, as many as eight other libraries definitely felt that the publicity on the local level has been quite poor.

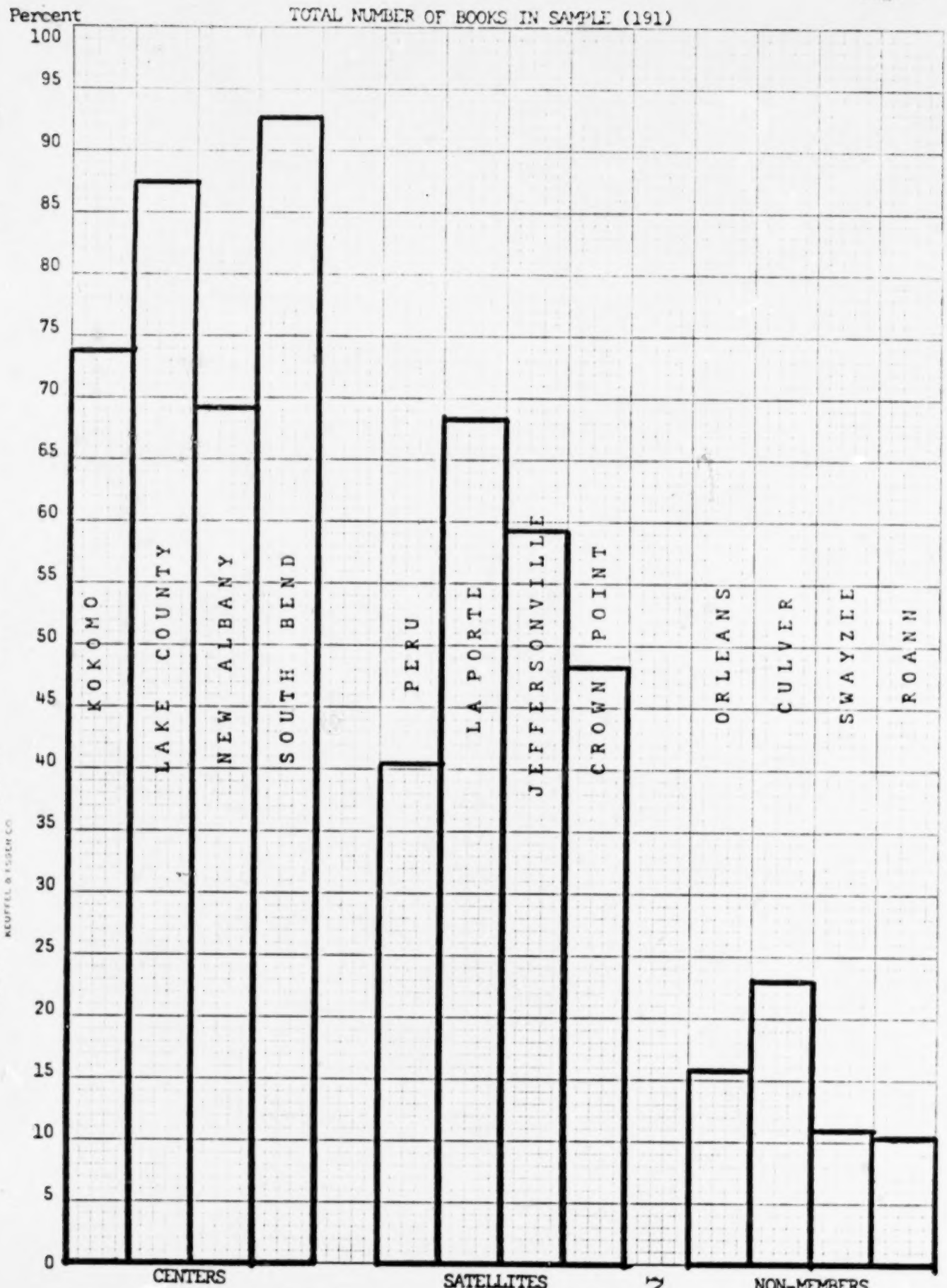
Four of the twelve libraries visited engage in some form of reciprocal service with their neighboring libraries. Lake County has the most extensive reciprocal borrowing arrangement with courier service and most of the public libraries in that county participate. This "local service network" overshadows the effects and impact of the TWX service in that region even though Lake County does use the TWX extensively. In another region, one library did not join the TWX Network because of the reciprocal arrangements already in existence.

In the short time that was available, it was most difficult to identify centers and satellites which held special collections. Most librarians identified other libraries in the region which held information related to local history, Indiana history, or old out-of-print general materials. One noted exception was Peru which has a good circus collection. The Crown Point librarians noted that Don Thompson from Wabash College has completed a study of Indiana Library collections.

Table 1 graphically displays the strengths and weaknesses of the libraries visited in terms of the total books sampled. Appendix A contains tables which illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of each collection subdivided by the Dewey classification, Notable Books, etc.

During the discussion of the proposed regional resource centers, librarians recommended that the centers should contain general medical and technical books, government documents, audio-visual materials, multiple copies of current titles, microforms of local history materials, and facilities for printing, and they should provide courier service. Librarians in the larger public libraries seemed to be more favorable to the regional resource center idea than librarians in the smaller public libraries. Librarians in these smaller libraries felt that the regional centers would mark the end of the small town public library.

Most librarians were of the opinion that their local board of trustees were conservative. This conservatism occasionally has slowed the growth and development of the library program, but its strongest effects have been felt in the area of interlibrary cooperation. Seldom is there a desire to serve people or coordinate programs outside "the city," "the township," or "the taxing district." Thus, isolationism and duplication of effort may lead to more overall costs and


Percent
TOTAL NUMBER OF BOOKS IN SAMPLE (191)
100
95
90
85
80
75
70
65
60
55
50
45
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
KOKOMO
LAKE COUNTY
NEW ALBANY
SOUTH BEND
PERU
LA PORTE
JEFFERSONVILLE
CROWN POINT
ORLEANS
CULVER
SWAYZEE
ROANN
CENTERS
SATELLITES
NON-MEMBERS

at the same time perpetuate mediocre library programs for all. Of course, there were some heartening exceptions with boards trying hard to provide an excellent library program for their community and region.

Obviously, most libraries operate under a tight "realistic" budget, and many of the libraries are right at the top of the taxing rate allowed by law. With the press of program demands, perhaps librarians and boards need to investigate current or create additional sources of outside funding.

Finally, librarians felt that the State Library should assist the Public Libraries in many other ways. There was a consistent feeling that the State Library should demonstrate dynamic leadership by taking the initiative in legislative field work and by planning, directing, and developing the long talked about cooperative state-wide library services. In addition, there was some expressed need for training workshops, a stronger state board, building consultants, and of course, a vastly improved budget for the State Library.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been made in light of the foregoing remarks plus some general impressions derived from the on-site visits. Hopefully, these comments will be constructive and will assist in improving the TWX service.

1. Profile of the TWX service. There is a need for better understanding concerning who is served by the TWX System, the rate of success, and the types of materials provided. Thus, select a six month to one year period of time and develop a graphic picture of the TWX use by each member library during that period of time. What percentage of requests originate from the centers? from the satellites? What percentage of TWX requests are handled by the centers? by the State Library? by out-of-state sources? What percentage of requests go unfilled?

2. Telephone communication procedures. The telephone procedures used by satellite personnel should be standardized. Items to be considered in the standardization would include:
    a. length of the request
    b. number of calls
    c. popular materials
    d. acceptable consistent method for submitting information about each request
3. Determine the overlap in the verification of TWX requests. According to the centers and many of the satellites, when a request reaches the State Library it has been completely verified. Further, they believe that the State Library automatically verifies the request for a second or third time. Thus, a check of the percentage of requests requiring further verification at the State level would be in order. Perhaps, the time consuming routine of verification at the State level could be eliminated for the TWX requests.
4. An understanding must be reached between the South Bend Public Library and the State Library concerning the role of a Center in the TWX System. It would be a dubious assumption to believe that a network tends to operate primarily for the benefit of the weaker libraries. In addition, the network cannot progress unless the centers get from the system at least as much as they give to it.
5. Encourage the policy established by the LaPorte Public Library concerning TWX requests. After the LaPorte Library receives three requests for an item, it is generally ordered.

6. Determine the "hitting" average for TWX requests. This was discussed briefly under the first recommendation.
7. Determine the percentage of materials that are filled and arrive at the requesting library within one week's time; one month's time; etc. This would provide a profile of the waiting period for requests.
8. Develop brief separate training materials for center and satellite personnel. If the current TWX Guidelines are not adequate, then develop a short explicit brochure or basic handbook which presents pertinent facts about the network policy. This publication should be geared to the para-professional level for these individuals are most directly involved in the day-to-day operation of the network system. Perhaps this would relieve some of the misunderstandings related to network policy.
9. Establish a standardized date due procedure for all TWX loans. Thus, patrons of the requesting library can keep the materials for a logical duration.
10. Establish a time limit (i.e., two months) on requests so that after a certain date, unfilled requests automatically would be dropped.
11. Determine the peak use periods for the TWX machines and the average waiting time experienced by center personnel as they attempt to get their machine "on-line."
12. The statistical reporting form should be examined to insure that appropriate and adequate information is being gathered and processed for continued evaluation of the TWX Network.

13. Efforts must be made to continually inform the public, special users, and the library profession about the TWX Network activities. The special user group includes doctors, nurses, lawyers, engineers, teachers, etc. They should receive publicity concerning the TWX System at their regional and state meetings.

14. Reciprocal borrowing arrangements should be encouraged. This is a direct, meaningful, and often efficient service to the local patrons of a region.

15. Don Thompson's report should be consulted before an additional study is made of the holdings in Indiana Public Libraries. It is entitled Indiana Library Studies Report #12--Directory of Special Subject Collections in Indiana.

16. The Regional Resource Center idea must be pursued with vigor. Hopefully, technical processing of materials for public libraries might be handled at this level; courier service provided; and housing of duplicate copies, expensive materials, microform copies, etc.

17. A continuous educational campaign must be launched to inform each member of the Board of Trustees of their rights and responsibilities. They must learn what a viable public library program is, how it can be implemented, services provided by each feature of the program, and, of course, costs involved for any proposal under consideration.

APPENDIX A

Sample listings of titles which reflect the interests of the adult patrons of public libraries were drawn up and checked against the public catalog of each selected center, satellite, and non-member library. Three lists used were the "Notable Books" for 1968, 1969, and 1970. These lists were selected by the American Library Association. The fourth and fifth lists were comprised of ten fiction and ten non-fiction bestsellers reported in the monthly listings of PUBLISHERS WEEKLY. Only those books which appeared on the PUBLISHERS WEEKLY listing for a minimum of six months were considered.

Standard non-fiction works cited in the PUBLIC LIBRARY CATALOG formed the basis of the sixth list. Titles were selected from among works listed in the areas of United States History, Government and Politics, Labor, Sociology, Food and Nutrition, Photography, and Family Living.

While these lists are not completely comprehensive, they do afford an overview of the comparative strengths and weaknesses of a given library collection. The data gathered concerning collections has been summarized and is presented in graphic form in Tables 2 through 13.

TABLE 7
NOTABLE BOOKS FOR 1968 (44)

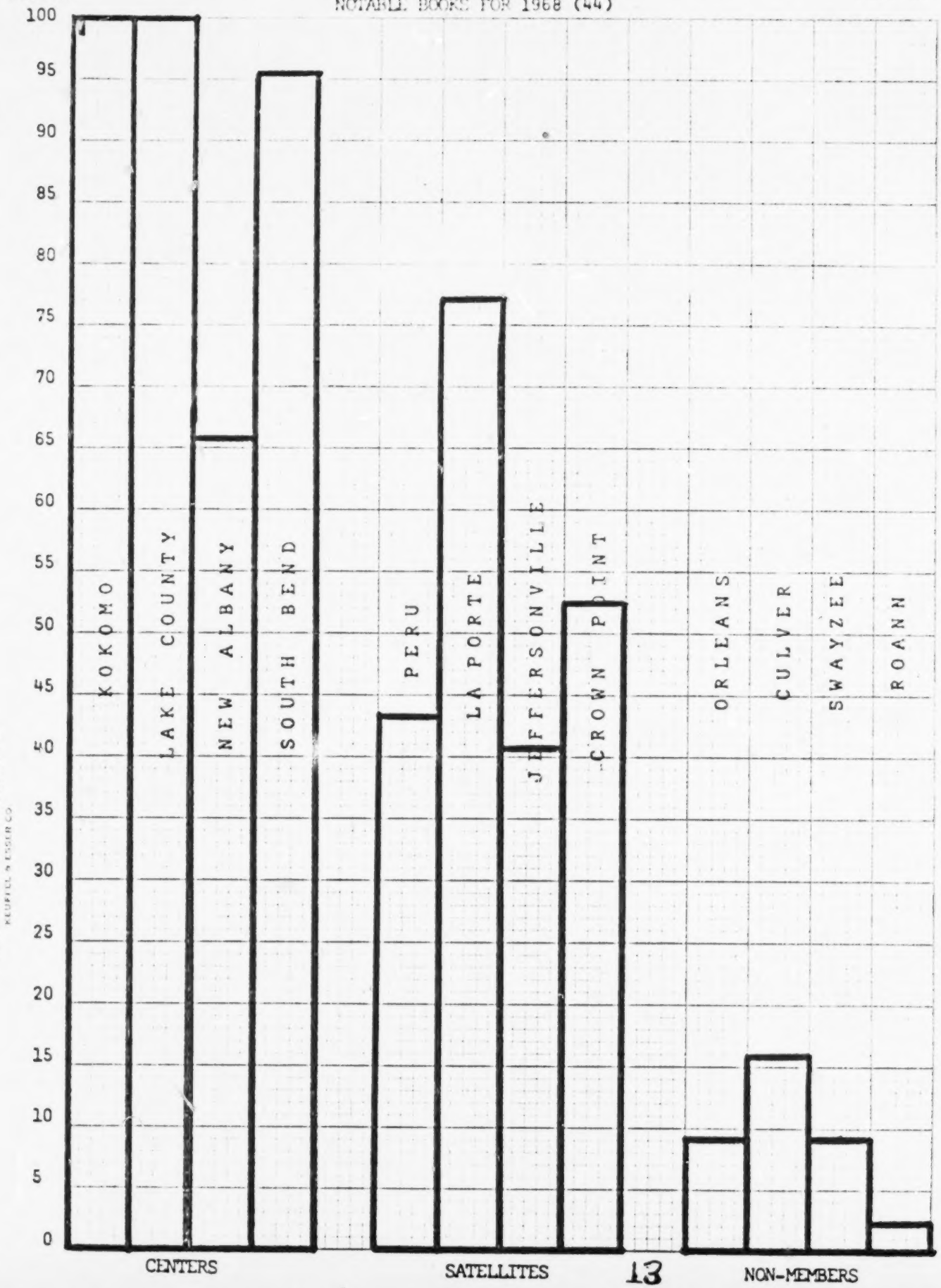
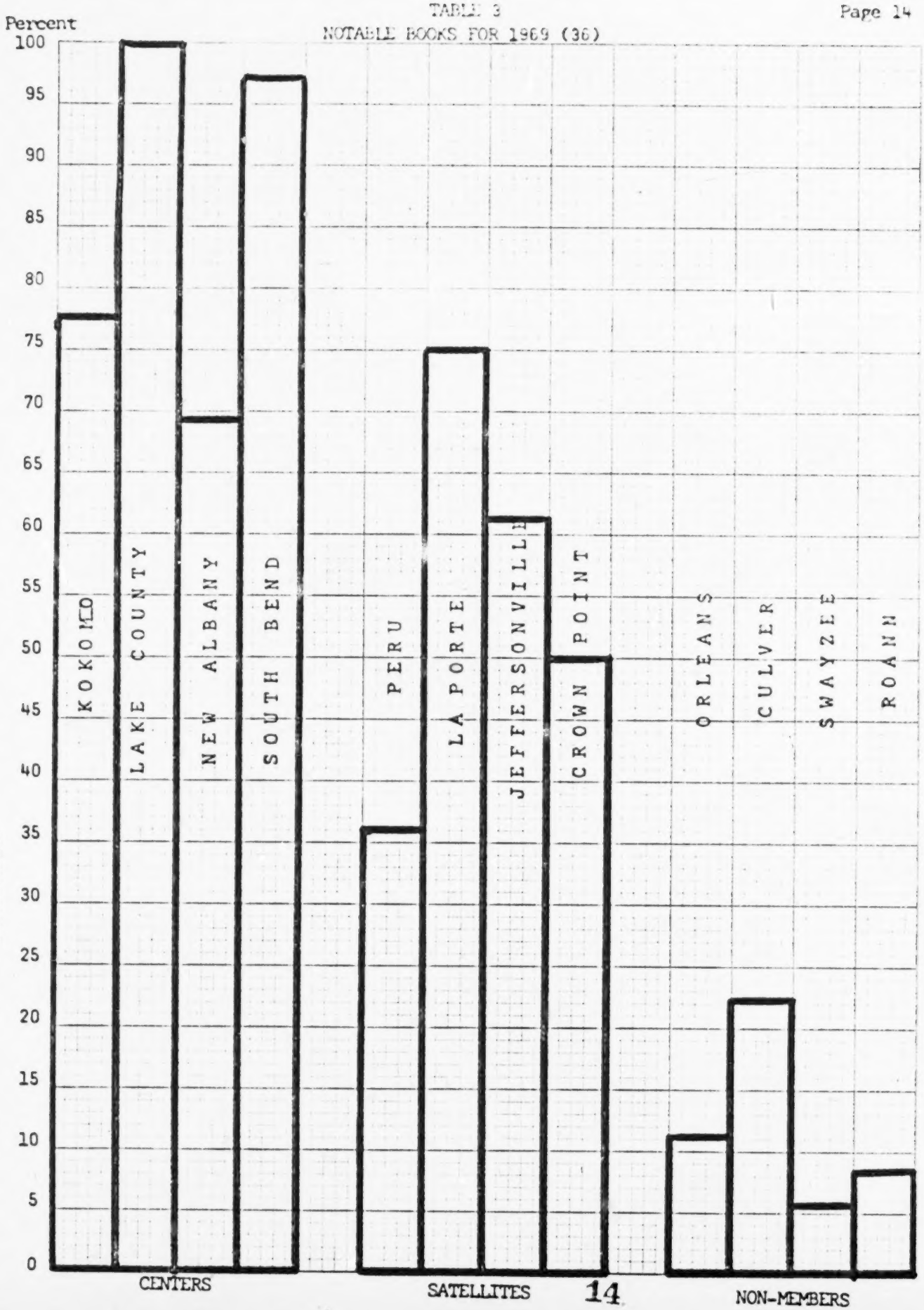
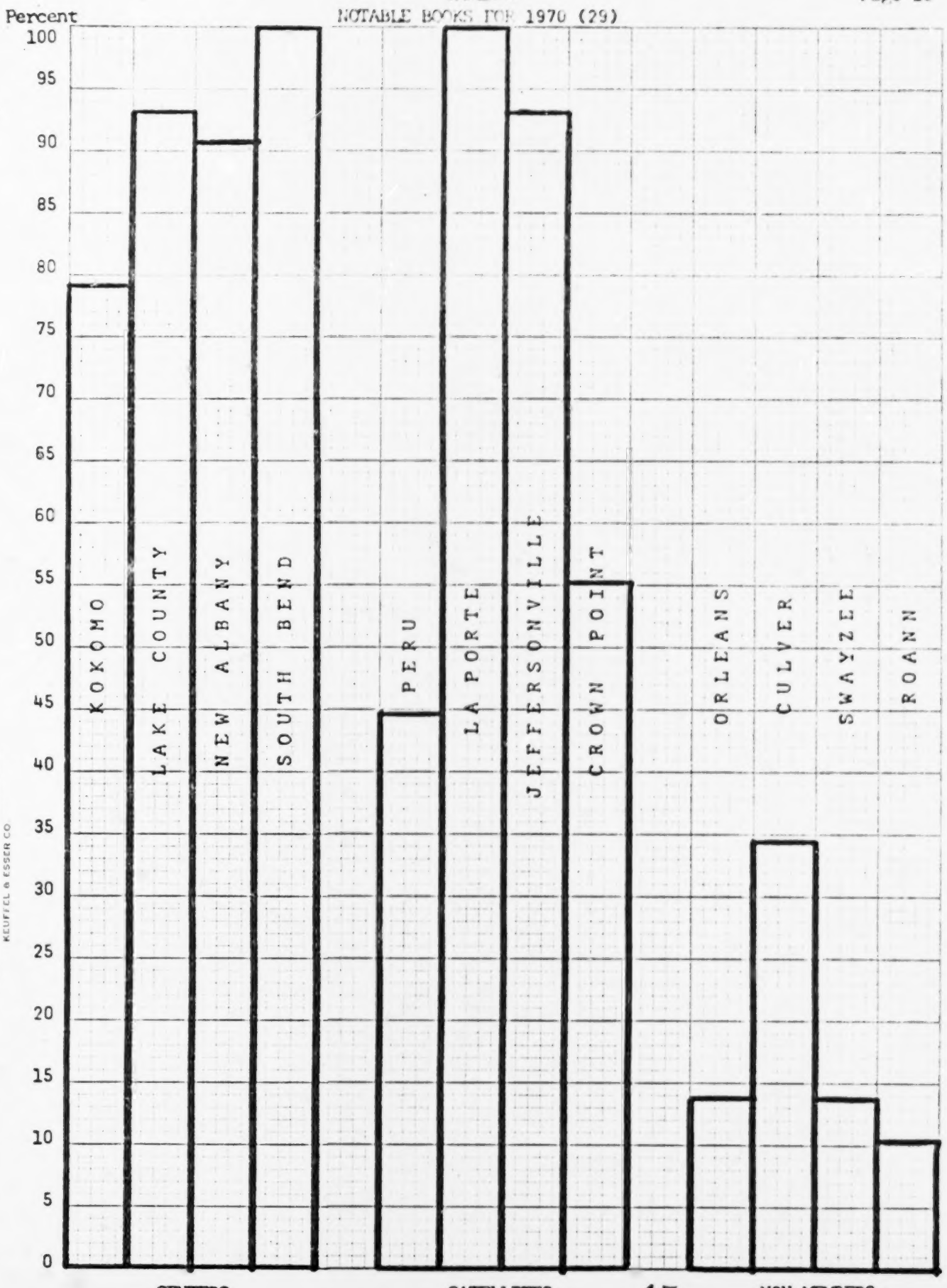


TABLE 3

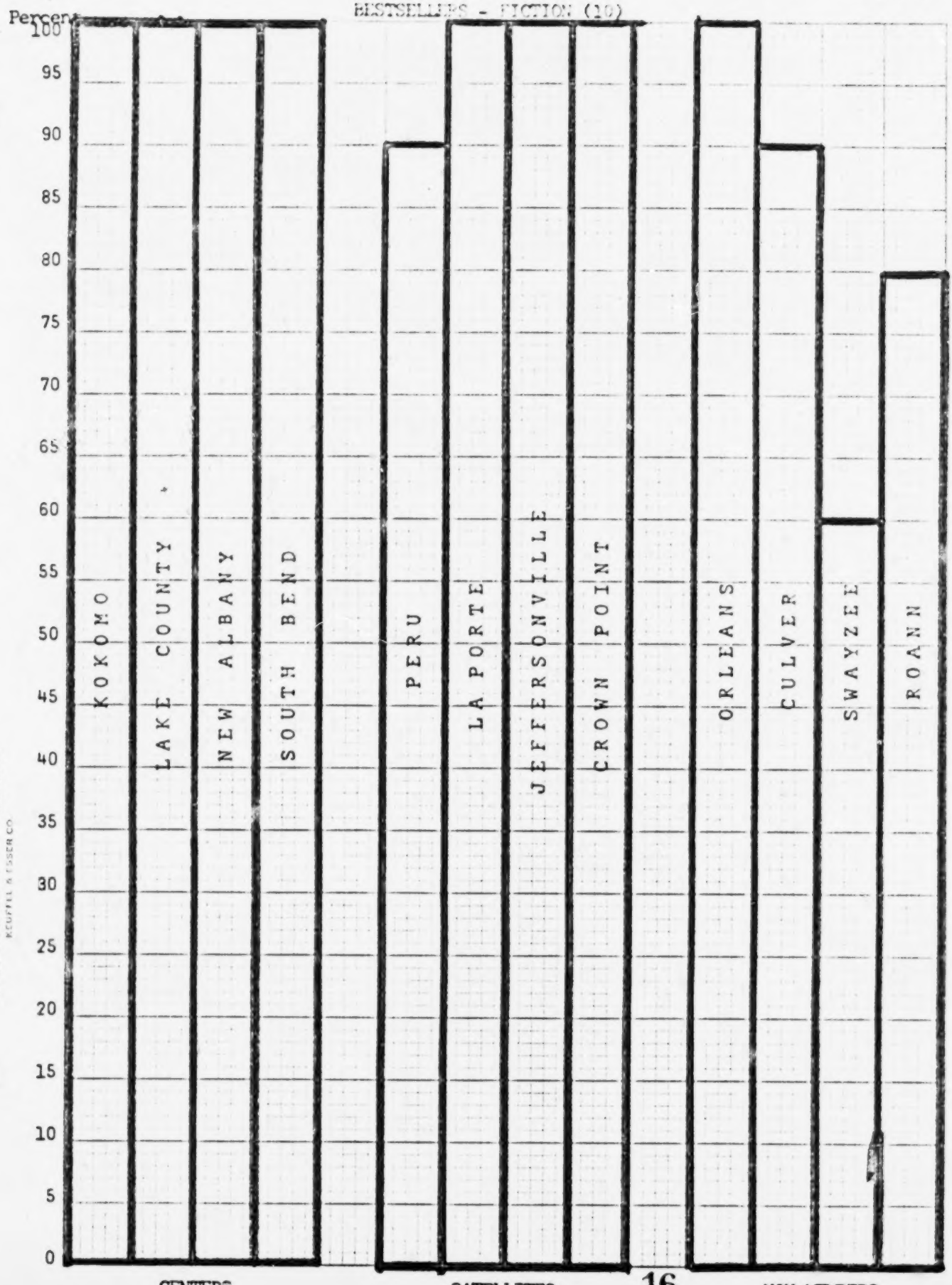
NOTABLE BOOKS FOR 1969 (36)





KEUFFEL & ESSER CO. MADE IN U.S.A. 46 0860 5 X 5 TO ½ INCH 7 X 10 INCHES

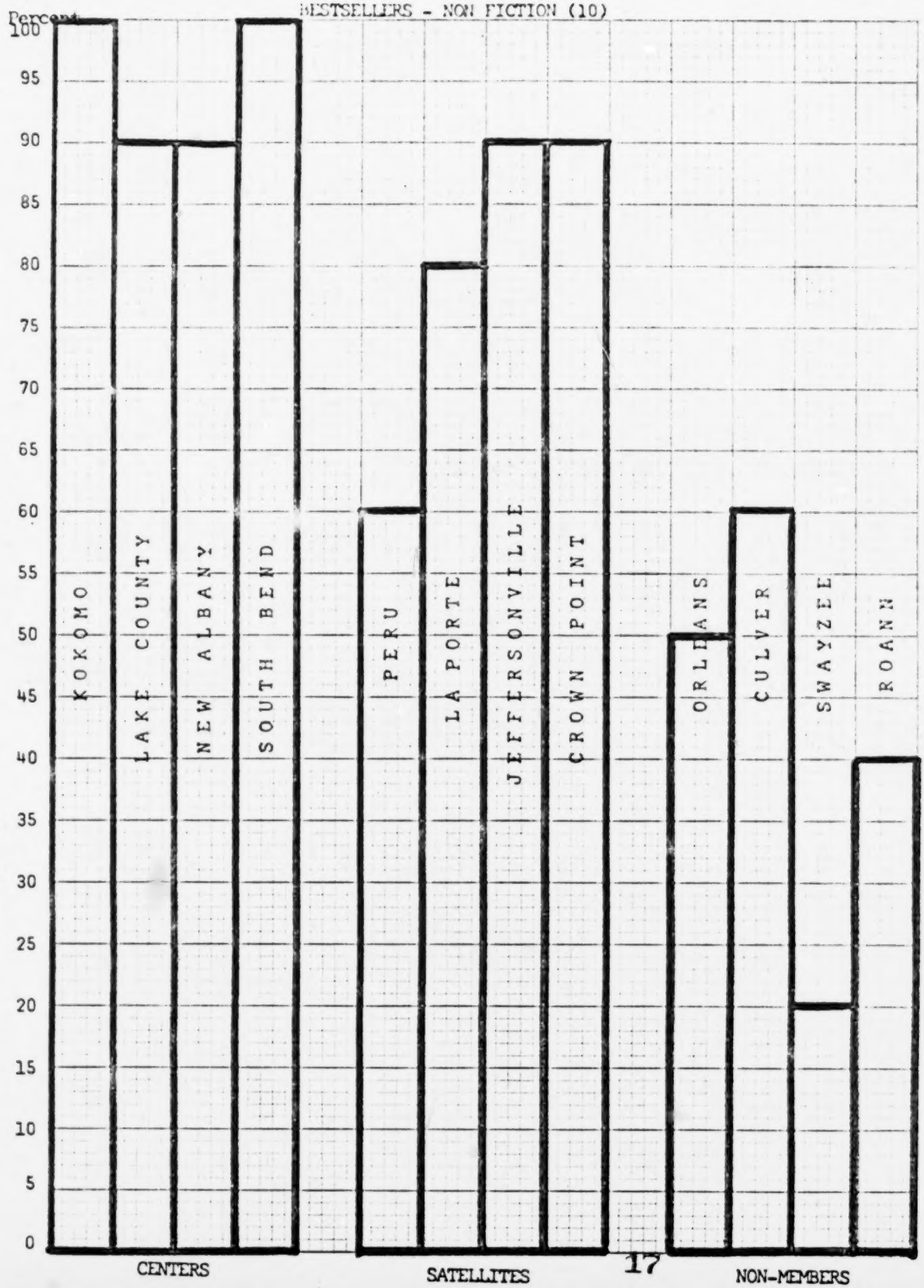
BESTSELLERS - FICTION (10)



KEUFFEL & ESSER CO. 46 0860

TABLE 6

BESTSELLERS - NON FICTION (10)



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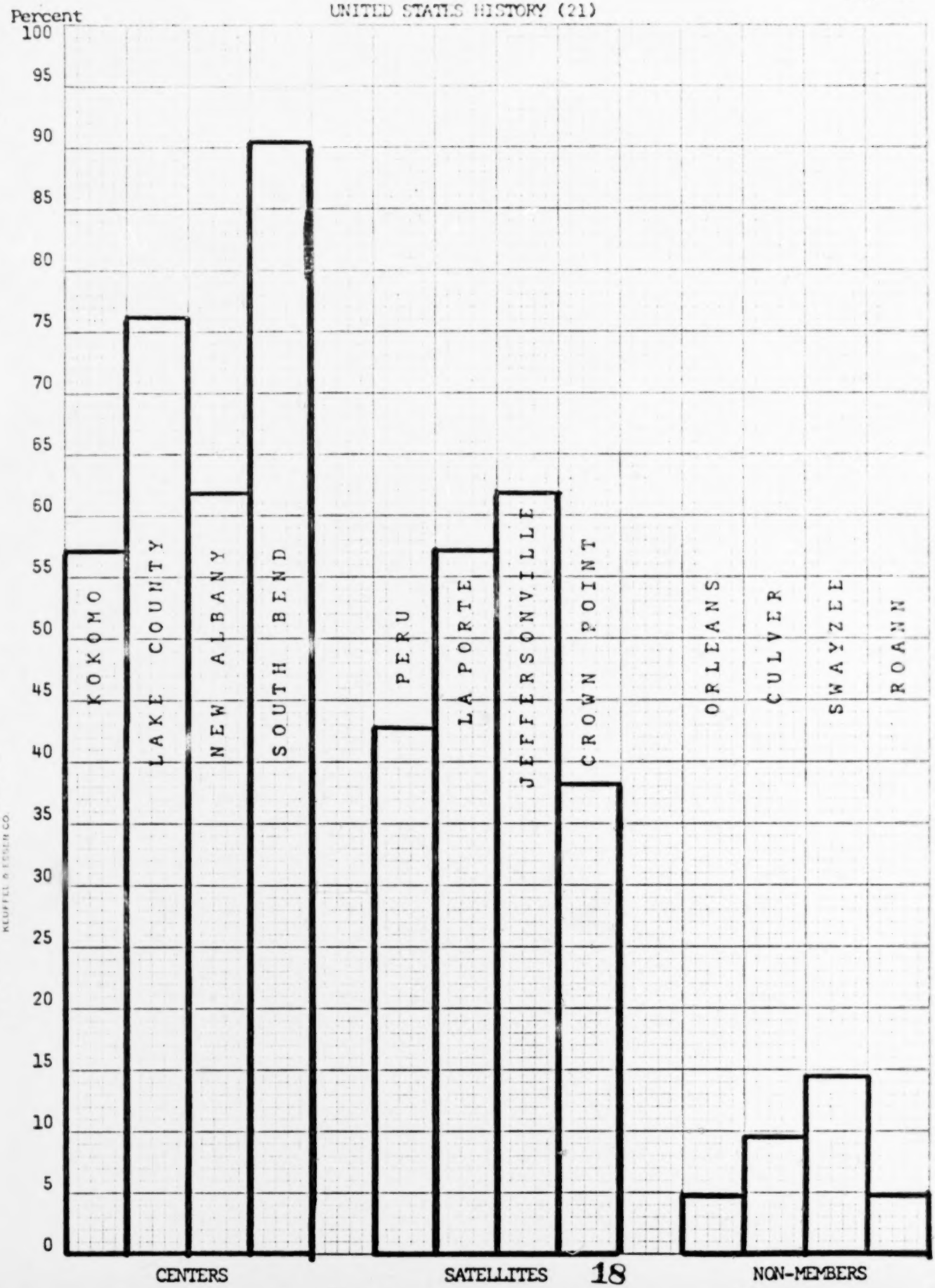
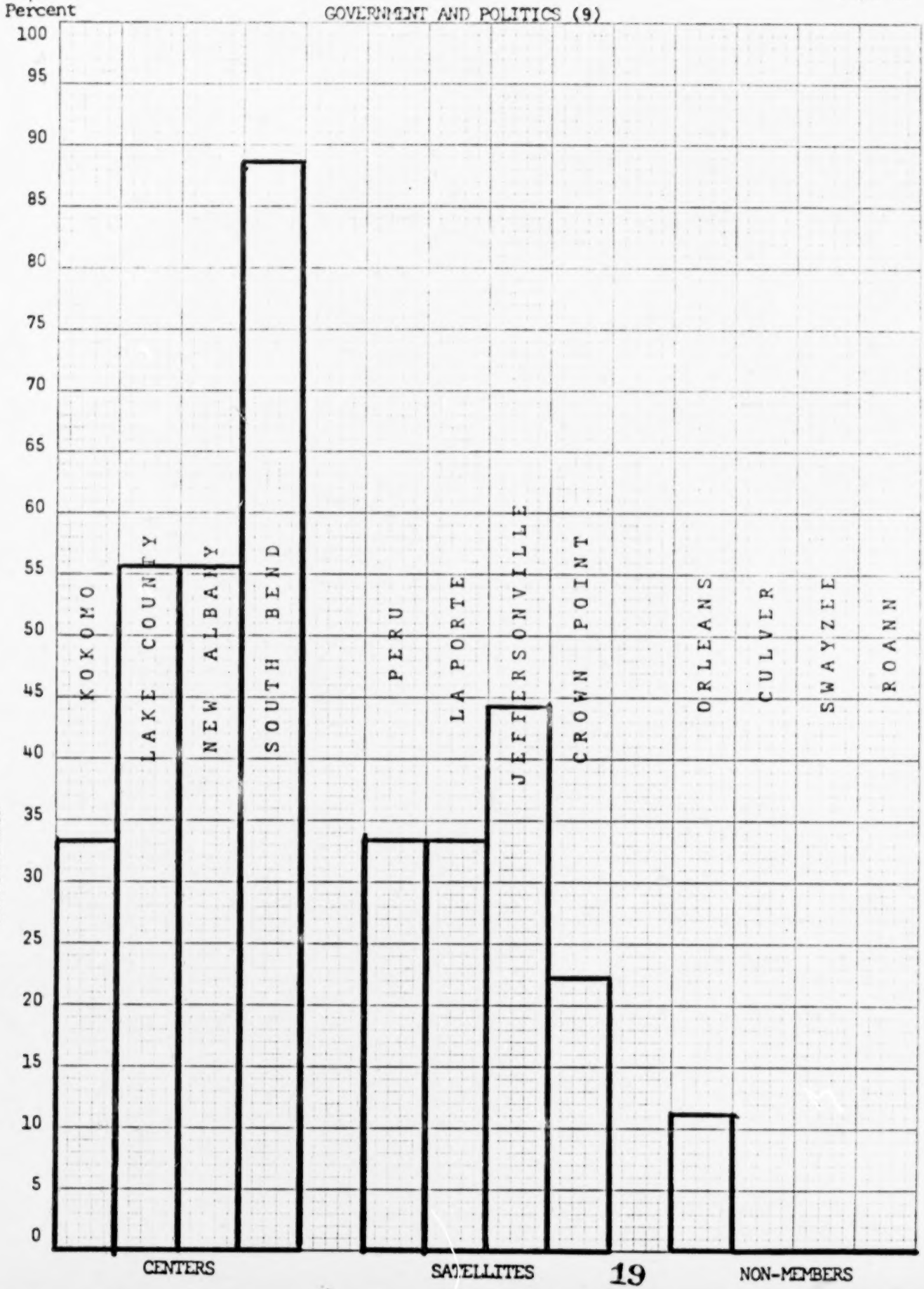
7 X 10 INCHES
KEUFFEL & ESSER CO

TABLE 7
UNITED STATES HISTORY (21)



GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS (9)



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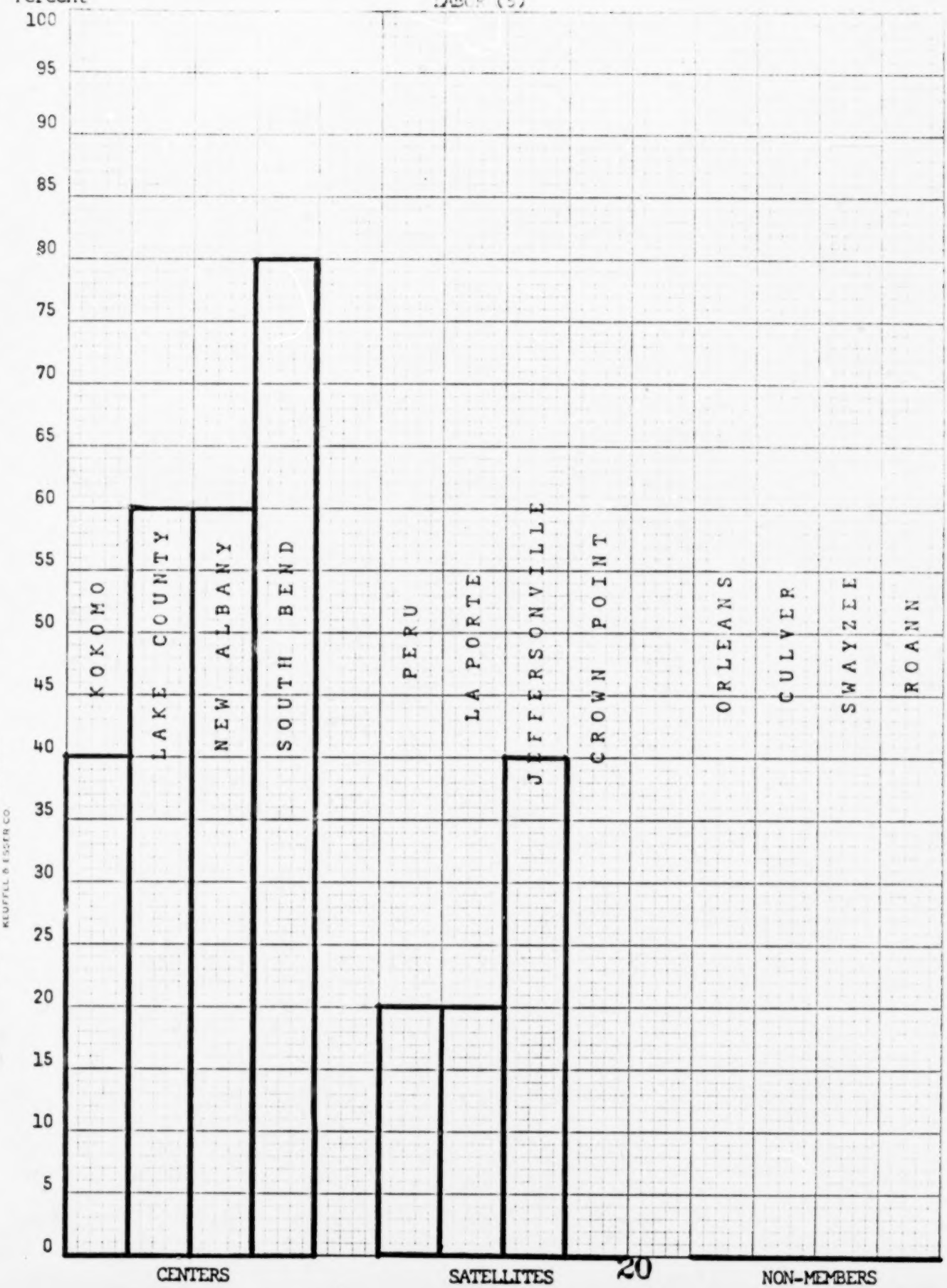


KEUFFEL & ESSER CO
5 X 5 TO 1/2 INCH 46 0860
7 X 10 INCHES
MADE IN U.S.A.

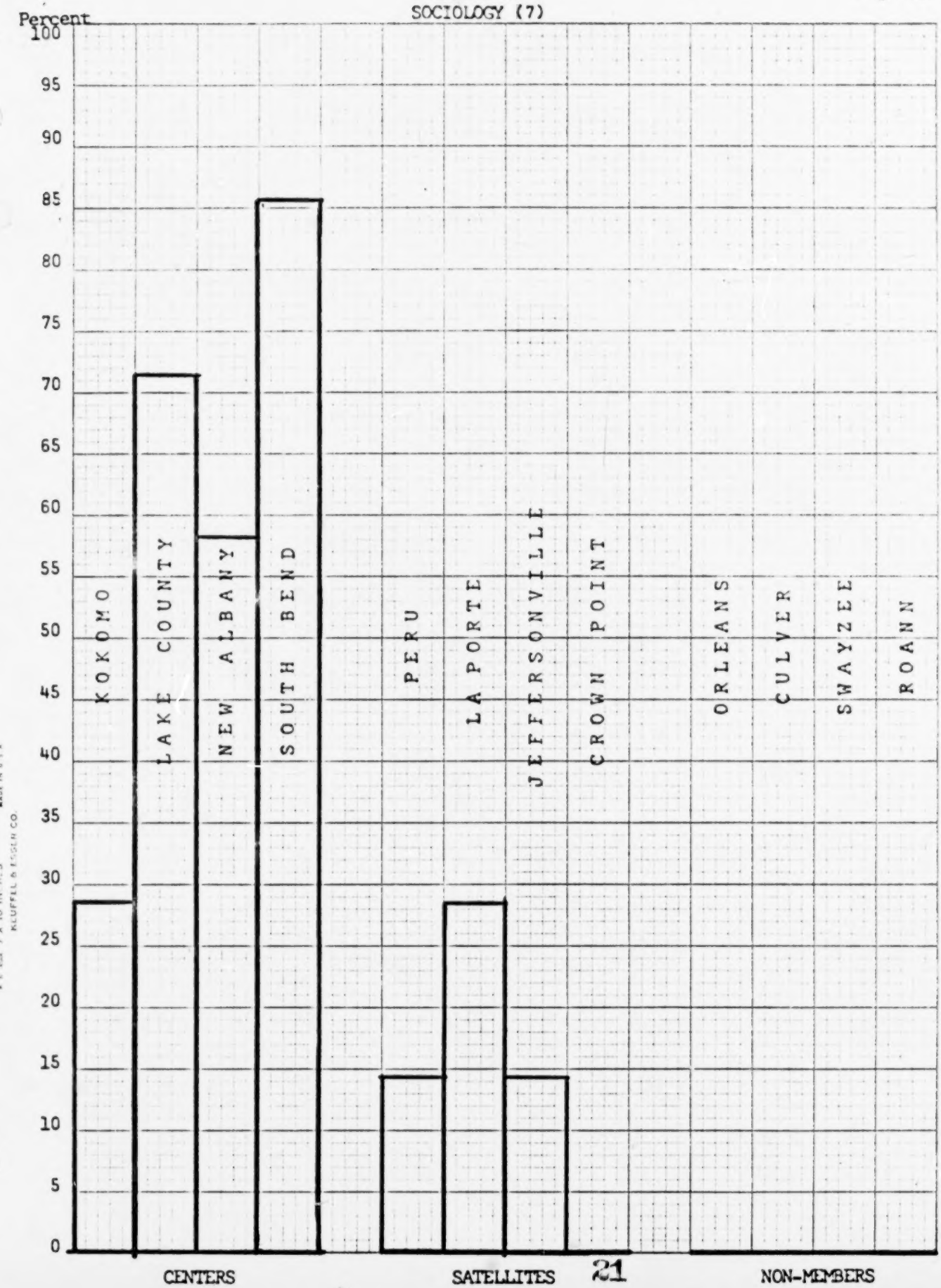
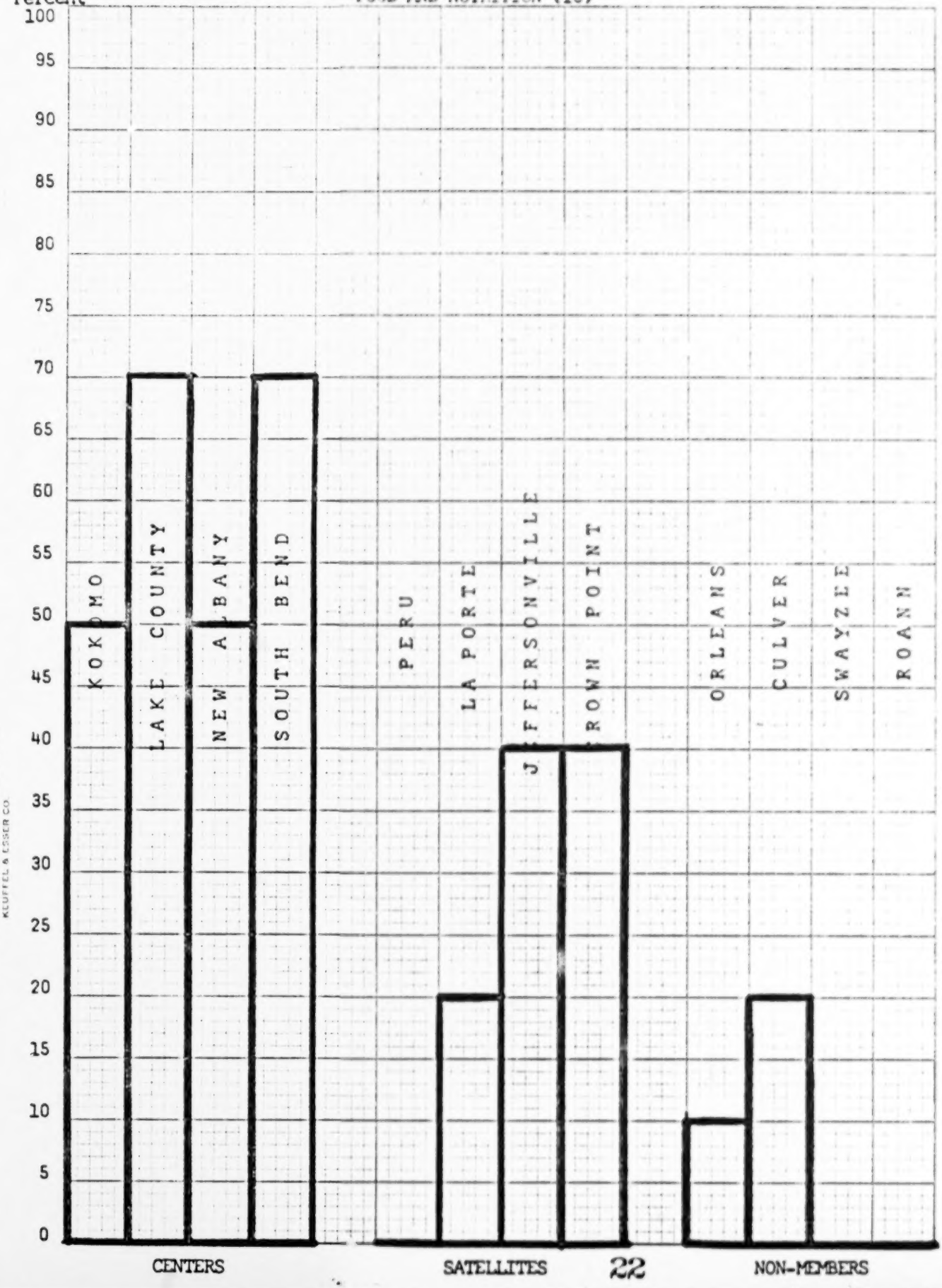

Percent
100
95
90
85
80
75
70
65
60
55
50
45
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
KOKOMO
LAKE COUNTY
NEW ALBANY
SOUTH BEND
PERU
LA PORTE
JEFFERSONVILLE
CROWN POINT
ORLEANS
CULVER
SWAYZEE
ROANN
CENTERS
SATELLITES
NON-MEMBERS

TABLE 11
FOOD AND NUTRITION (10)



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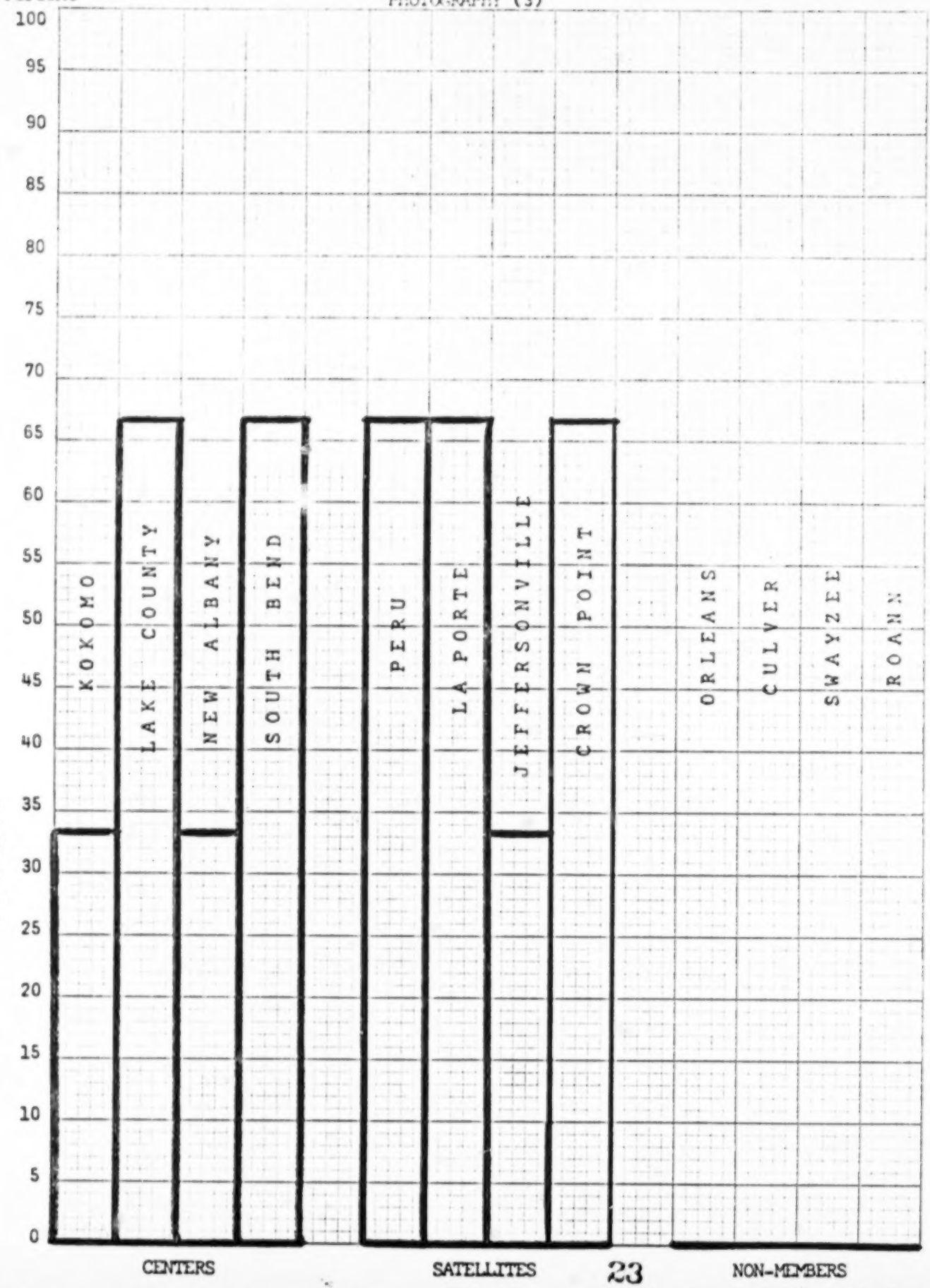
7 X 10 INCHES
KEUFFEL & ESSER CO.

TABLE 12
PHOTOGRAPHY (3)



FAMILY LIVING (7)